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Letters to the Editor

Katina Strauch
Against the Grain

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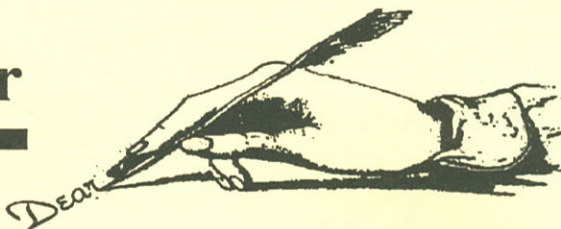
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Letters to the Editor



More letters!!! Hooray! Keep them coming!!

■ From **Christian M. Boissonnas**, Acquisitions Librarian, Cornell University Library, Ithaca, NY

Dear Katina,

Earlier this summer I sent you a contribution for *Against the Grain* in which I related Cornell's experience with firm-order bidding. (Ed note: This was published in *ATG*, v.2#4, September 1990.)

My paper included the names of the two vendors who submitted the winning bids, but did not include the names of the other bidding vendors. You decided to edit out the names of the winning vendors, an editorial decision which I respect but profoundly disagree with.

This paper stated facts, specifically those that contributed to my vendor selection decision. It did not include opinions as to which vendors were better or worse, nor did it advocate that other libraries use or not use the named vendors.

There are two legitimate reasons for editing out these names. The first is if the information about them is libelous or slanderous, and the second, if it can be construed as illegally restricting commerce.

In the first instance the two vendors were winners of a contest in which all vendors competed fairly and on equal terms. It is hard to imagine how they would be defamed by being identified by name with success. The losing vendors could conceivably have some cause to complain if the information about them was not factual or was supplied with intent to harm them. But the winning vendors?

With respect to the restricting commerce argument, there is no way that this can be applied here. I did not say: "Use these vendors only" or "don't use these other vendors" or "be careful when using them." I didn't even imply it. I merely showed how they responded to our Request for Proposals and why I selected them. As you well know each library's circumstances are so different that any action taken by one may be totally inappropriate for another.

While I recognize your right, indeed, your need, to protect the neutrality and legal standing of *Against the Grain*, I disagree with your implicit assumption that the mention of the two names threatened that neutrality or legal standing. Other publications in librarianship, among which *LAPT*, mention vendors by name. I have just gone to the stacks, opened a volume of *LAPT* at random and verified this. My article on cost plus, which appeared last year,

includes vendor names and compares them in a way in which it could be easily assumed, erroneously, by someone outside our profession that some were cheaper than others. If it's good enough for *LAPT* it seems to me that it should be good for *Against the Grain*.

I hope that you will allow some time somewhere in the program of the upcoming conference to debate this issue.

Editor's Note: I would love to hear reactions by others to this issue. What do you think? However, I need to remind Christian that while I am many things I am NOT Pergamon Press and, contrary to Robert Maxwell (see page 18), I wait for many people!

■ From **Fred Gullette**, Publisher, Book News, Inc., Portland, Oregon:

A tip of the hat and a tip regarding Richard Jasper's "When it sounds too good to be true ..." (June 1990, *Against the Grain*):

To learn the name and address of a boxholder, write to "Postmaster" at the zip code, state that business is being conducted out of the box, and ask that name and address be supplied. (They may ask for \$1.00 to cover costs.) We've all been burned,

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but there's no excuse for doing business with unidentified box holders.

■ From **Nat Bodian**,
Publisher's Marketing Consultant

Dear Katina:

In my article on changes in book publishing in the *ATG* June issue, I'd lamented about the "Decrease in Publishers Publishing Books About Publishing."

I'd mentioned in my article "In distant years, R.R. Bowker called itself 'The Publisher's Publisher.' Today, Bowker has abandoned that roll."

My reference to books for the publishing industry dealt with

small, single-author, limited-appearance references and monographs written by people in the industry for people in the industry.

In the September issue of *ATG* you published a response from Peter Simon, Vice President for Database Publishing at Bowker. The publishing industry books Simon mentioned in his response were *Books in Print*, and *Literary Marketplace*. It points up Bowker's current publishing focus—database and subscription publications that can be updated and reissued annually or periodically, mainly to subscribers.

The other books Simon mentioned were two forthcoming updated editions of older Bowker works, and my two volumes of *Book Marketing Handbook*, Vol.1 published 1980,

and Vol.2, published 1983. (Both still selling).

Peter Simon's response in *ATG* seems to reinforce my earlier lament. People active in the book industry today have virtually no opportunity for publication should they write about their work or experience. Publishers like Bowker, who claim to serve the industry, are declining such works at this time with turn down phrases such as "...does not fit into our present publishing program."

The quote in the preceding paragraph is not made up. It is a Bowker publisher's response to a 1990 proposal for a new publishing industry guide that in earlier years Bowker would have snapped up in a minute.

My comments in my June *ATG* article still stand, Peter Simon's letter to the contrary. ✎

Rumors

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remain the same.

Acquisitions 91 (sponsored by **Genaway and Associates** in Canfield, Ohio) will take place in Minneapolis, Minnesota, on April 10 and 11, 1991.

And we understand that **SISAC** has agreed to move forward in the development of electronic data interchange (**EDI**) standards for journal orders, order acknowledgements, claims, cancellations, and invoices. Both **EBSCO** and **Faxon** are members of the International Working Party on Magnetic Media Transfer, a group of international journal publishers and subscription agents working toward the transmission of messages containing dispatch information. **Sandra Paul**,

Managing Agent for **SISAC**'s parent organization (and regular contributor to *Against the Grain*), the Book Industry Study Group, is

coordinating the efforts across Subcommittees and with **BISAC**. The study Group joined **ASC X12** last year. Paul has acknowledged the growing use of **X12** formats for national and international **EDI**. "Although **SISAC**'s library constituency has traditionally used data communications formats based on **ANSI/NISO Z39.2**,

enthusiastic support as we've had in **BISAC**'s work, I expect it will take a full year to finalize the **ASC X12** formats for serial transactions." If you want to contribute your two cents here, contact **BISAC**, 160 Fifth Ave., New York, NY 10010 (phone: (212)929-1393, FAX (212)989-7542.



NISO's agreement to migrate its standards to **ASC X12** allows us to proceed with our work," Sandy says. "If **SISAC** gets as much

The **Commission on Preservation and Access** and the **Southeastern Library Network (SOLINET)** have begun a collaborative project to design and conduct a preservation management seminar for library staff who have part-time preservation responsibility. To be led by **SOLINET** staff and be held for one week hopefully during the summer of 1991, the new seminar will help library staff members develop the management skills and implement the activities that contribute to successful

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